# What is Basinwide Water Quality Planning?

Basinwide water quality planning is a watershed-based approach to restoring and protecting the quality of North Carolina's surface waters. Basinwide water quality plans are prepared by the NC Division of Water Quality (DWQ) for each of the 17 major river basins in the state (Figure 3 and Table 2). Preparation of a basinwide water quality plan is a five-year process, which is broken down into three phases (Table 3). While these plans are prepared by DWQ, their implementation and the protection of water quality entail the coordinated efforts of many agencies, local governments and stakeholder groups across the state. The first cycle of plans was completed in 1998, but each plan is updated at five-year intervals.

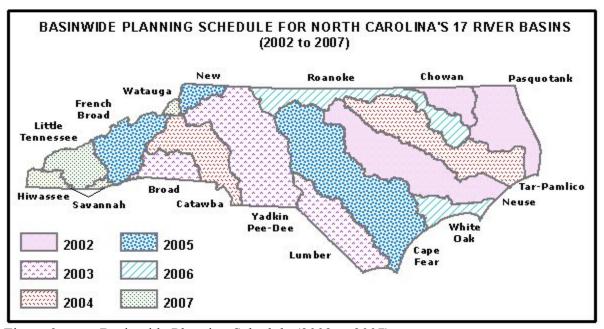


Figure 3 Basinwide Planning Schedule (2002 to 2007)

## **Goals of Basinwide Water Quality Planning**

The goals of basinwide planning are to:

- Identify water quality problems and restore full use to Impaired waters.
- Identify and protect high value resource waters.
- Protect unimpaired waters yet allow for reasonable economic growth.

DWQ accomplishes these goals through the following objectives:

- Collaborate with other agencies to develop appropriate management strategies.
- Assure equitable distribution of waste assimilative capacity.
- Evaluate cumulative effects of pollution.
- Improve public awareness and involvement.
- Regulate point and nonpoint sources of pollution where other approaches are not successful.

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Table 2 Basinwide Planning Schedule (2000 to 2007)

5/2002 5/2002 5/2002 1/2002	7/2002 7/2002 7/2002	11/2002 12/2002 1/2003
5/2002 1/2002	7/2002	
1/2002		1/2003
	2/2002	0 0 0
1 (2.0.0.2	2/2003	7/2003
1/2003	3/2003	9/2003
9/2003	12/2003	7/2004
2/2003	3/2004	9/2004
7/2004	9/2004	12/2004
2/2005	4/2005	9/2005
3/2005	10/2005	3/2006
4/2005	8/2005	4/2006
4/2006	8/2006	1/2007
9/2006	12/2006	6/2007
1/2006	2/2007	8/2007
2/2006	3/2007	9/2007
1/2006	2/2007	8/2007
1/2007	4/2007	10/2007
	9/2003 2/2003 7/2004 2/2005 8/2005 4/2006 9/2006 1/2006 1/2006 1/2006 1/2007	9/2003       12/2003         2/2003       3/2004         7/2004       9/2004         2/2005       4/2005         8/2005       10/2005         4/2005       8/2005         4/2006       8/2006         9/2006       12/2006         1/2006       2/2007         2/2006       3/2007         1/2006       2/2007

Note: A basinwide plan was completed for all 17 basins during the first cycle (1993 to 1998). This schedule represents the second and third cycle for each.

Table 3 Five-Year Process for Development of an Individual Basinwide Plan

Years 1 through 2 Water Quality Data Collection and Identification of Goals and Issues	<ul> <li>Identify sampling needs</li> <li>Conduct biological monitoring activities</li> <li>Conduct special studies and other water quality sampling activities</li> <li>Coordinate with local stakeholders and other agencies to continue to implement goals within current basinwide plan</li> </ul>
Years 2 through 3  Data Analysis and Collect Information from State and Local Agencies	<ul> <li>Gather and analyze data from sampling activities</li> <li>Develop use support ratings</li> <li>Conduct special studies and other water quality sampling activities</li> <li>Work with state and local agencies to establish goals and objectives</li> <li>Identify and prioritize issues for the next basin cycle</li> <li>Develop preliminary pollution control strategies</li> <li>Coordinate with local stakeholders and other agencies</li> </ul>
Years 3 through 5  Preparation of the Draft Basinwide Plan, Public Review, Approval of Plan, Issue NPDES Permits and Begin Implementation of Plan	<ul> <li>Develop draft basinwide plan based on water quality data, use support ratings, and recommended pollution control strategies</li> <li>Circulate draft basinwide plan for review and present draft plan at public review</li> <li>Revise plan after public review period</li> <li>Submit plan to Environmental Management Commission for approval</li> <li>Issue NPDES permits</li> <li>Coordinate with other agencies and local interest groups to prioritize implementation actions</li> <li>Conduct special studies and other water quality sampling activities</li> </ul>

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## **Benefits of Basinwide Water Quality Planning**

Basinwide planning and management benefits water quality by:

- Focusing resources on one river basin at a time.
- *Using sound ecological planning and fostering comprehensive NPDES* permitting by working on a watershed scale.
- Ensuring better consistency and equitability by clearly defining the program's longterm goals and approaches regarding permits and water quality improvement strategies.
- Fostering public participation to increase involvement and awareness about water quality.
- Integrating and coordinating programs and agencies to improve implementation of point and nonpoint source pollution reduction strategies.

## **Division of Water Quality Functions and Locations**

For more information on the above documents, DWQ activities or contacts, visit <a href="http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/basinwide/">http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/basinwide/</a> or call (919) 733-5083 and ask for the basin planner responsible for your basin of interest. Feel free to contact the appropriate Regional Office for additional information (Figure 4). For general questions about the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, contact the Customer Service Center at 1-877-623-6748.

#### **How You Can Get Involved**

To assure that basinwide plans are accurately written and effectively implemented, it is important for citizens and local stakeholders to participate in all phases of the planning process. You may contact the basinwide planner responsible for your basin anytime during the plan's development. Upon request, the basin planner can also present water quality information and basin concerns to local stakeholder groups.

To make the plan more inclusive, DWQ is coordinating with the local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), council of governments, NC Cooperative Extension Service, the county Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and stakeholder groups to develop language and identify water quality concerns throughout the basin. Citizens can be involved during this phase of the plan by contacting the local soil and water conservation district or cooperative extension service.

During the public comment period, the draft plan is available online and by request for a period of at least 30 days. DWQ welcomes written comments and questions during this phase of the planning process and will incorporate comments when appropriate.

#### **Some Other Reference Materials**

There are several reference documents and websites that provide additional information about basinwide planning and the basin's water quality:

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- A Citizen's Guide to Water Quality Management in North Carolina (August 2000). This document includes general information about water quality issues and programs to address these issues. It is intended to be an informational document on water quality. Visit the website at <a href="http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/basinwide/">http://h2o.enr.state.nc.us/basinwide/</a> to download the document.
- French Broad River Basinwide Assessment Report (June 2003). This technical report presents physical, chemical and biological data collected in the French Broad River basin. The report is prepared by the NC Division of Water Quality (DWQ) Environmental Sciences Branch and is available on-line at <a href="http://www.esb.enr.state.nc.us/">http://www.esb.enr.state.nc.us/</a>.
- French Broad River Basinwide Water Quality Management Plan (May 1995) and the French Broad River Basinwide Water Quality Plan (May 2000). These first basinwide plans for the French Broad River basin present historic water quality data, information and recommended management strategies for the first two five-year basin planning cycles.
- North Carolina's Basinwide Approach to Water Quality Management: Program Description. (Creager, C.S. and J.P. Baker, 1991). NCDENR DWQ, Raleigh, NC.

#### How to Read the Basinwide Plan

#### Chapters 1 - 7: Subbasin and Watershed Information

- Summarizes information and data by subbasin, including:
  - Recommendations from the previous basin plan.
  - Achievements, current priority issues and concerns.
  - Impaired waters and waters with notable impacts.
  - Goals and recommendations for the next five years by subbasin.

#### **Chapter 8 - 16**

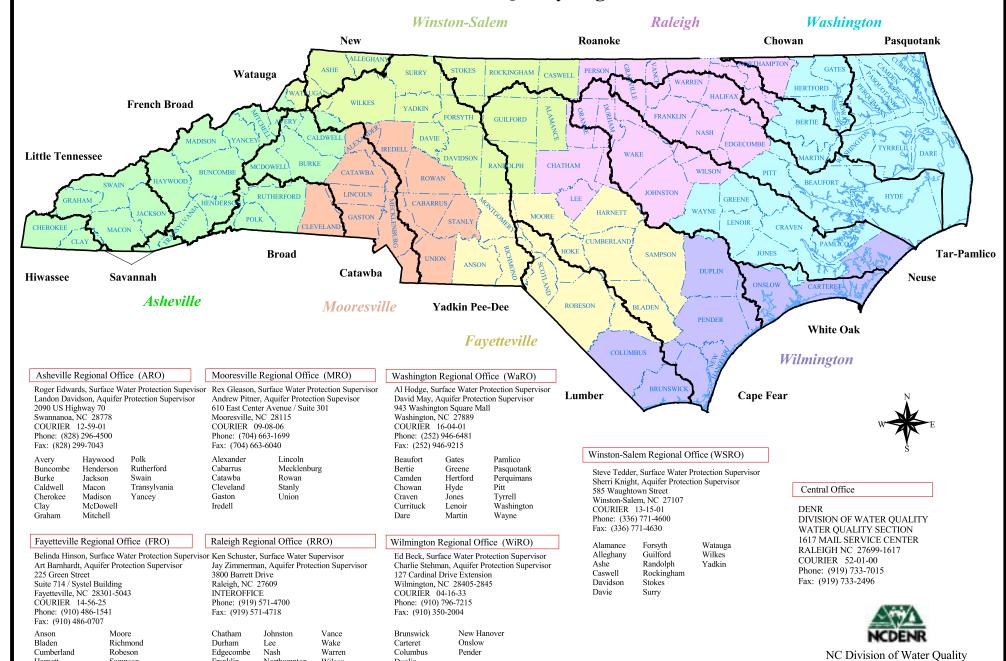
- Presents information on various topics of interest for the protection and restoration of water quality in the basin, including:
  - Stream classifications, population and land cover changes.
  - Stressors to water quality.
  - Agricultural, forestry and permitting activities in the basin.
  - Water and natural resources.
  - Water quality initiatives.

#### **Appendices**

- Population and land use changes over time, local governments in the basin.
- Describes water quality data collected by DWQ, use support methodology and 303(d) listing methodology.
- Lists NPDES dischargers and individual stormwater permits.
- Provides workshop summaries, points of contact, and a glossary of terms and acronyms.

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# Figure 4 North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources **Division of Water Quality Regional Offices**



Basinwide Planning Program

June 1, 2005

Harnett

Montgomery

Hoke

Sampson

Scotland

Franklin

Halifax

Granville

Northampton

Orange

Person

Wilson

Duplin